

Message Text

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21

ACTION EA-10

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PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01

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R 201230Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3921

INFO USDEL JEC PARIS

AMCONSUL BIEN HOA

AMCONSUL CAN THO

AMCONSUL DANANG

AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PINS, SOPN, VS

SUBJ: VIETNAMESE PRESS COVERAGE OF COMMUNIST OFFENSIVE

1. NEWS OF COMMUNIST OFFENSIVE AND RELATED EVENTS CONTINUES
SUPERSEDE AND DOMINATE ALL OTHER PRESS COVERAGE BY CONSIDERABLE
MARGIN. ON MARCH 14 DAI DAN TOC (STRONG OPPOSITION), DOC LAP (IN-
DEPENDENT), CHINH LUAN (CONSTRUCTIVE OPPOSITION), AND PRO-
GVN DAN CHU ALL DEVOTED ENTIRE FRONT PAGE WITH BANNER
HEADLINES AND PHOTOS TO STRAIGHT NEWS REPORTING AND EDITORIAL
COMMENT ON LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS RELATED TO
ONGOING OFFENSIVE. DAN CHU HEADLINED WARNING THAT "NORTH
VIETNAM IS BRINGING ADDITIONAL RESERVES INTO THE RVN" AND
"INTENSITY OF GENERAL OFFENSIVE COULD BE EQUAL TO 1972."
SAME ISSUE CARRIED FRONT PAGE ARTICLE ANNOUNCING THAT DRAFT
AGE WAS BEING LOWERED TO 17 AND RAISED FROM 39 TO 43 AND
THAT "42 COMMUNIST TANKS WERE KNOCKED OUT IN BAN ME THUOT." CHINH
LUAN HEADLINED LOSS OF TRI TAM AND "MAJOR FIGHTING IN HIEU
THIEN." FRONT PAGE COVERAGE INCLUDED DETAILS OF NEW DRAFT
REGULATIONS AND REPORT THAT US DEMOCRATIC CONGRESSMEN REJECTED
SUPPLEMENTAL MILITARY AID REQUEST FOR RVN AND KHMER REPU-
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BLIC BY VOTE OF 189 TO 49. DOC LAP HEADLINE OF MARCH 14

ANNOUNCED DEATH OF DARLAC PROVINCE CHIEF AND THAT 5,000 COMMUNIST TROOPS OCCUPIED EMBATTLED CITY OF BAN ME THUOT. ON SAME DAY, DAI DAN TOC GAVE PROMINENT COVERAGE TO REPORT THAT CABINET COUNCIL REVISED DRAFT LAW TO MEET BATTLEFIELD REQUIREMENTS AND WOULD LIMIT NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS "MOBILIZED IN PLACE." SAME ISSUE REPORTED LOSS AIR VIETNAM AIRCRAFT IN PLEIKU AND RAN SEPARATE ACCOUNT OF ORDER TO EVACUATE PLEIKU. A FRONT-PAGE SUB-HEADING IN SAME ISSUE STATED "ROAD BETWEEN QUI NHON, DA NANG AND HUE WAS CUT IN MANY PLACES."

2. ON MARCH 15 TRANG DEN (INDEPENDENT/OPPOSITION) REPORTED AN QUANG BUDDHISTS HAD "APPEALED TO SIGNATORIES OF PARIS AGREEMENT TO RESUME NEGOTIATIONS." ON SAME SAME DAY, CHINH LUAN REPORTED MASS MOBILIZATION OF 17 YEAR OLDS CAUSED CONCERN IN SCHOOLS AND SAID "AN QUANG WILL HOLD SPECIAL MEETING ON DRAFTING OF MONKS." DOC LAP CARRIED REPORT THAT "MEDICANT NUNS RELEASED PROTEST MEMO DEMANDING PEACE AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ART. 11 OF PARIS AGREEMENT AND QUAT CUONG (PRO-GVN) RAN MFA CONDEMNATION OF COMMUNIST SEIZURE OF SIX DISTRICTS IN RVN.

3. IN LAST FEW DAYS OPPOSITION PAPERS CARRIED STATEMENTS AND REPORTS ATTRIBUTED TO OPPOSITION PERSONALITIES AND/OR GROUPS CRITICAL OF GVN POLICY OR PERFORMANCE. ON MARCH 15, DAI DAN TOC CARRIED BRIEF ACCOUNT OF SENATOR TON THAT DINH'S (CHAIRMAN OF VN PUBLISHERS ASSOC) CHARGE THAT MILITARY COMMANDERS IN BAN ME THUOT WERE "INCOMPETENT." SENATOR DINH, ACCORDING TO SAME ARTICLE, CALLED FOR PROMPT GVN ACTION IN CARING FOR REFUGEES AND CRITICIZED CURRENT LEADERSHIP OF RVN." SAME ARTICLE QUOTED PACM'S FATHER THANH AS SAYING THAT "INSTEAD OF MOBILIZING 17 YEAR OLD STUDENTS AND YOUTHS, IT IS BEETER TO SEND 150,000 POLICEMEN TO THE FRONT BECAUSE THESE ELEMENTS HAVE BEEN USED TO "SUPPRESS DEMONSTRATIONS." FATHER THANH WAS REPORTED AS ALSO SAYING THAT "FLOWERS AND GHOST SOLDIERS SHOULD ALSO BE COMMITTED TO THE FIGHTING." ON MARCH 18, CHINH LUAN REPORTED THAT AN QUANG PROTESTED NEW MOBILIZATION MEASURES AND DOC LAP DECLARED THAT "BUDDHIST AND CATHOLIC CLERGY UNANIMOUSLY DEMAND RECONSIDERATION OF GENERAL MOBILIZATION LAW."

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4. ON MARCH 18 - 20 MOST PAPERS RAN DETAILED ACCOUNTS OF FIERCE FIGHTING IN SCATTERED LOCATIONS AND DIRECTED CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION TO MASS EXODUS FROM PLEIKU AND KONTUM PROVINCES. DOC LAP REPORTED THAT PHUOC AN DISTRICT WAS OVERRUN BY COMMUNISTS AND TRANG DEN DESCRIBED SCENE OF "WAR REFUGEES FLOCKING TO NHA TRANG." PITIFUL PLIGHT OF WAR VICTIMS AND DESCRIPTION OF HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF REFUGEES FLEEING

FROM THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS WAS PRESENTED IN DETAIL IN MARCH 20 ISSUE OF CHINH LUAN AND OTHERS. PRO-GVN PAPERS ALSO DESCRIBED EXODUS BUT DENIED REPORTS THAT GVN WAS GIVING UP THE HIGHLANDS.

QUAT CUONG OF MARCH 19 HAILED FIRST LADY'S APPEAL TO "VIET-NAMESE WOMEN TO HELP THE COMBATANTS RESIST COMMUNIST AGGRESSION" AND REPORTED THAT "VATICAN CONFIRMS MASSACRE OF CATHOLIC PRIESTS AND FAITHFUL IN BAN ME THUOT."

5. ON MARCH 20, DOC LAP CONCLUDED THAT "ALMOST ALL MILITARY AND CIVILIAN PEOPLE HAVE LEFT PLEIKU AND KONTUM. THE HIGHLAND PROVINCES ARE LARGE BUT TOTAL ONLY 2.5 PERCENT OF SVN'S MILLION PEOPLE. NOW, ARVN HAS MOVED NEARER THE COASTLINE WITH INSURED SUPPLY LINES, WHILE NVN AND VC HAVE LONGER AND MORE DIFFICULT ONES. BUT NOW, THE REFUGEES FORM A HEART-RENDING HUMANITARIAN PROBLEM." DAI DAN TOC EDITORIALIZED THAT "PRESIDENT FORD'S ARGUMENTS ARE BUT ROUNDABOUT ONES WHICH CANNOT PERSUADE ANYONE FOR THEY ARE TOO OUT-MODED VIS-AVIS US PUBLIC OPINION. THIS PROVES THAT US LEADERS' THINKING STILL MARKS TIME WHEREAS PUBLIC OPINION PROGRESSES AT JET SPEED." MEANWHILE, PRO-GVN TIEN TUYEN PROCLAIMED THAT "TO ANSWER GENERAL MOBILIZATION FOR NATIONAL SALVATION IS THE CITIZEN'S DUTY IN EMERGENCIES, A LAW OF THE NATION AND OF PATRIOTIC PEOPLE CONSCIOUS OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITY AND DUTY."

6. COMMENT: IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT PERSONAL CRITICISM OF PRESIDENT AND THE GVN LEADERS IS NOT NOW APPEARING IN OPPOSITION PRESS.
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